

THE
INTEREST
OF
GREAT BRITAIN,
RESPECTING THE
FRENCH WAR.

By WILLIAM FOX:

AUTHOR OF AN ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF GREAT
BRITAIN, ON THE PROPRIETY OF ABSTAINING
FROM WEST-INDIA SUGAR AND RUM.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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An Examination of Mr. Paine's Writings.

A Summary View of Evidence relating to the Slave Trade; and,
An Address to the People of Great Britain, 26th Edition.

AMONGST the peculiar circumstances which characterise the French Revolution, is the great abhorrence with which it has been beheld by the European Monarchs, and the almost universal disposition which has appeared amongst them to suppress it; an investigation whence this disposition originates may not be altogether useless. Revolutions in nations are not very rare occurrences; the King of Great Britain has lost the far greater part of his dominions, by a recent revolt, without exciting any great concern among his fellow monarchs; or any very powerful combination of them in his support. A renunciation and abhorrence of monarchy could not, one would have thought, have excited this alarm. *America, Holland, Switzerland*, and even *England* formerly, renounced the authority of their sovereigns, and formed republics: yet neighbouring monarchs, fought their alliance, and abetted their revolt. The recent cruelties in France can hardly be the real cause of the rancour which has appeared against their antecedent revolution, as Mr. *Burke's* clamour was raised against it at a time when all his art was requisite to dress out a tale of woe: when far less blood had been shed, than in any revolt of equal difficulty, and importance: when instead of dethroning their monarch, they had left him so considerable a share of power, as to enable him to endanger the new government; and bestowed on him a civil list to the utmost of his desires, and far beyond what our King enjoys. Had the French King appeared cordially disposed to support the new order of things; and had the sovereigns of Europe, manifested the same disposition; there is no ground to suppose, the recent events would have taken place. All these events, and the situation of the King and Queen of France are the effects, and not the cause, of the royal association against the French Nation; and may far more justly be attributed to Mr. *Burke* than to the people of France. They were naturally led to look to us, rather as allies, than as enemies; they considered us as the nation in Europe; whose government approximated the nearest to that which they had recently established: and when they saw the continent of Europe arming against them, they threw themselves on our justice, and offered us the office of mediator: when this was declined, when Mr. *Burke* was allowed to stigmatize them with impunity; when the French Princes were inciting all Europe against them; when almost every King in Europe appeared disposed to attack them, and their King was employing the immense revenue they had granted him, in supporting these measures; we cannot much wonder at the rage of the French populace, or its consequences; nor will any man believe it to be the real reason, of any measures which may be adopted against them. Indeed whatever may be the catastrophe, of the Royal Family of France; or whatever may have been its origin; it can hardly be deemed a sufficient cause, for deluging Europe in blood. Transitions from the throne to an untimely grave, occur in almost every page of history; they enforce the arguments of the mor-

alist, embellish the works of the poets, and form the principal pathos of our drama. In the space of about half a century the blood of four Queens, as beautiful and accomplished as the Queen of France, streamed on an English scaffold; and altho' it was an age of chivalry, not a sword started from its scabbard to avenge them. Even sovereigns themselves do not in general seem to possess very sympathetic feelings; they rarely concern themselves in the fate of those fellow monarchs with whom their own interests are not interwoven. The present age has seen a King precipitated from his Throne to a Prison, and from thence to his Tomb; not by injured subjects, but by her whom he had raised to empire; and who now sways the bloody scepter, without having excited any exclamations of horror, which seem all to have been reserved for the present occasion.

If a regard for the French Monarch be not the real motive for this confederacy, far less can we suppose it to be a concern for the people of that nation; tho' Mr. *Burke* and his associates are extremely pathetic in lamenting the misery which they have brought upon themselves. It is certainly a somewhat remarkable circumstance that *thirty* millions of people, should so universally, and so pertinaciously, persist in being miserable; and that it should require such very extraordinary means to compel them to be happy. But were this misery real, it might rather be surmised, they would have been left undisturbed, to be as miserable as they pleased, as a terrible example, to deter surrounding nations, from rebelling against their sovereigns.

Is it then the peculiar principles on which the French Revolution is founded, which have rendered them dangerous to surrounding nations, whose peace and safety call for their extirpation? These principles do not seem to be very hostile to human happiness. To renounce foreign conquest and aggressive war: To confine themselves to the arts of peace, content with cultivating the soil, and improving the natural advantages heaven has allotted them: To improve the human species by national education, thus attaching man to society by enabling him to partake of its benefits, and apportioning human happiness as equally as possible amongst human kind. These, if errors, do not seem to be of a very atrocious nature, and should they fail of being realised, it ought rather to excite our sorrow and commiseration, than our contempt, our indignation, or our vengeance.

But it is said, that in the seeming excellence of these principles, consists their danger; that by these reveries of literary enthusiasts, mankind are induced to abandon a present and practicable state of happiness, in pursuit of a visionary system which never can be realized. If so, it became more peculiarly necessary that the French Government should have been left undisturbed; that its impracticability, and inutility, might have been clearly manifested. The Russian peasant, and the German boor, might have been more content, under their present despotism, had it appeared that the principles of the French revolution, naturally led to a state

of anarchy, or a state of despotism, more oppressive than their own : whereas the anarchy and disorders of France, may now be ascribed to the obstruction it has met with, and disturbance it has received from foreign powers. Its advocates may now fairly contend—Had the French Government been left to its natural course, it would have produced a state of human happiness, superior to what the world ever beheld. The despots knew it, they knew the contrast it would form to the misery they spread around them. They resolved to prevent its maturity ; they combined to strangle it in its birth. They attempted it, but in vain.—And tho' defeated, and defeated in a manner that must destroy every hope of effecting its overthrow, yet they threaten renewed hostilities, and keep them in perpetual alarm ; in hope their deluded subjects may believe, that the miseries and calamities France indures from their machinations, are the consequences of the government they have adopted.

Much is it to be lamented, that in this country, there are many, who, fraught with national pride, cast a jaundiced eye around, and say, If the nations of Europe enjoy the sweets of liberty ; and their commerce ceases to be exposed to arbitrary laws administered by venal judges ;—if their land, no longer lies uncultivated, that their nobles may enjoy the pleasures of the chace ; if myriads of clergy, spread not over the countries, and draw away their wealth from the channels of industry.—If arbitrary and rapacious exactions, no longer rob the artisan and the peasant of the fruit of their industry ; or violence force them from their families, to fill up the ravages of death, in the armies of contending despots : then those nations, possessed of superior natural advantages to ourselves, will rear their heads around us. No longer shall we retain our proud pre-eminence ; or hold the equilibrium of empire. Confined to the natural advantages our Island possesses ; we shall cease to carry on half the commerce of Europe. No more will the British name carry terror through the world, or its terrors resound from pole to pole. But let such recollect,—that if patriotism be a virtue, it cannot be founded on such malignant propensities. It will not lead us to wish human happiness to be circumscribed by Albion's Cliffs : or that the genius of Liberty should cast her mantle only o'er our Isle. What let us ask, can be more unjustifiable, than to disturb or overthrow a government, merely because it will be productive of happiness.

But admitting the overthrow of the old Government in France, may by increasing its trade, agriculture, and manufactures, be at some distant period, prejudicial to our own : admitting also, that on this malignant principle we did not scruple to act : yet on the mere impolicy of it we may safely rest the question ; even under any circumstances, which can possibly take place.

To re-establish the old Government, we may now certainly reckon amongst the impossibilities. Had that been in contemplation, we should have attempted it earlier : when the Austrian and Prussian armies were in full strength ; undiminished

by sickness, and slaughter; and undismayed by defeat: when their exchequers, were not exhausted, and when they would not have rested solely on us for their supply. Even then, no man can imagine, that our weight thrown into the scale would have turned the ballance; our importance as a military power, is certainly not great, and where the combined armies of Austria and Prussia have met with so shameful a repulse, ours would hardly have made much impression. We might, to be sure, have sent a few regiments to be cut off at *St. Cas*, to be slaughtered in the fields of *Fontenoy*, or to sign a capitulation at *Closter-Seven*; and we may now replenish the exhausted coffers of the German Princes, to enable them to obstruct the progress of republicanism in *Germany*; for to overthrow it in France they can have now no hope, But may it not be asked, what interest can we have in this? what concern have we whether republicanism exist on the east, or the west of the *Rhine*, whether it be bounded by the Alps, or the Pyrennees? If the change of the government of France will be advantageous to its trade and manufactures, and thereby become injurious to ours, it is an evil we must prepare to meet, it cannot be prevented. *France* and *Flanders* are now established republics, and there, if any were, we must expect to see rising and flourishing manufactories: But from *Germany*, remote indeed must be any such danger; to improve her uncultivated ground will afford employment for an increasing population, and long prevent her engaging in extensive manufactures to our prejudice, and in the mean time they will be taken of us, in an increasing proportion. *Germany* is even now the best market we have for our manufactures, will she become a worse, when rich, populous, free, and happy? when the extensive German forests now reserved for their Princes to range over in pursuit of the wild boar, shall be converted into cultivated villages, full of inhabitants, enjoying the comforts, perhaps the superfluities of life, shall we not find an additional vent for our manufactures? If there be an event to be wished for by us, of more peculiar importance than any other, it is that *Germany* be free, and in connection with it that the Scheldt be opened. The British vessels will then unload our manufactures on the quays of *Antwerp*, from whence they will be conveyed, by the Flemish canals, by the *Rhine*, and in a thousand ramifications, to the interior parts of Europe. If there be a nation to whom the opening the port of *Antwerp* must be highly advantageous, it is *England*; if there be a nation to whom (except *Holland*) it will be injurious, it is *France*; they are giving to *Flanders* a port far superior to any one they themselves possess in the channel: yet even to *Flanders* is it unimportant, in comparison of us; for of English manufactures chiefly, *Antwerp* will become the depot.

France, in opening the port of *Antwerp*, cannot have any national advantage in view. She may be actuated by the pure motive of benefiting a neighbouring republic, but it may rather be surmised, that the views are political.

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It is remarkable, notwithstanding the countenance Mr. *Burke* has received, in vomiting forth his abuse of the French Nation, which certainly must have excited amongst them no little resentment against our *Court*, yet have they, with the most guarded circumspection, avoided every thing which could interest, or necessitate us as a nation, to interfere in the war. Tho' in full force on the borders of the defenceless *Dutch*, they have even taken a circuitous march to *Ruremonde*, that they might avoid infringing on their territories. Even Flanders they avowedly hold only till peace shall be restored, and thee leave the navigation to the Scheldt, to be then determined by the Austrians and Dutch, in the mean time navigating it merely for access to a fortress are in possession of, so that the security and advantage of Holland is not in dispute.

That this caution did not proceed from fear is evident, as well from the consideration of the trivial hurt we can do them, as from the extreme indifference, with which they seem to consider our threatened interference. That Mr. *Paine* should wish to precipitate the two nations into a war, is very natural. No measure can be so conducive to advance *America* as a maritime power. Her forests would then cover the ocean, and carry on the commerce of the Belligerent powers; while her privateers, under a French flag, might enrich themselves by plundering our commerce. But however anxious he may be for this, yet equally so will he be, that England should not be compelled into this war, or that she should not commence it, on any national ground. His writings evidence his object to be, to foment discord between the government and the people of this country: to make them hostile to each other; and no way can this be so effectually produced, as by the nation being precipitated into a war, and much more into a war on false principles, and without any national object in view,

Nothing can be more opposite to these views of Mr. *Paine*, than the present state of this nation. A high satisfaction in the government, and confidence in its administration, universally prevail; even most of those, who with the most microscopic eyes, explore its defects; yet persuaded of the general good it produces, are amongst the most anxious to give it their support: they look to gradual melioration and dread any great and violent change, more than the continuance of the system they disapprove. To destroy their universal confidence, this general good opinion, nothing can be so conducive as the war in contemplation. Wars, when commenced, even on popular ground, and originating in the public voice, have usually a different termination. Ideal benefits are in general held out, but they always vanish, when the real and certain evils of war come to be experienced! But in this war, not only every reflecting man will know its impolicy, and absurdity; but what is of much more importance, no object can possibly be held out to deceive the ignorant multitude. No story of the danger of our poor colonists from incroachment. No panic to be

raised of the danger of our commerce, from *Spanish guarda costas*. No men without ears to be brought to the Bar of the House of Commons. We shall hardly be treated with a sight of Spanish Dollars, dragged through the streets of *London*. When our funds are sunk, our commerce loaded with an heavy insurance, and the millions to be raised, call for additional taxes; we shall scarcely have the pleasure of being told of *America* being conquered in *Germany*. The events of this war will hardly occasion an *illumination*. In this case conquest and defeat will be pretty similar. The people will hardly be very anxious, for an extraordinary Gazette informing them, that we have effectually succeeded, in preventing the British manufactures going up the Scheldt. That we have amply secured the trade of *Amsterdam*, by obliging all the nations of Europe to guarantee to *Holland*, the right of firing on and sinking any English vessel that shall dare to carry the manufactures of *Sheffield*, of *Birmingham*, and *Manchester*, to the market of *Antwerp*. It may be doubted, whether an English mob will much relish being informed, that we have succeeded in restoring the antient French monarchy to its former lustre, and that the National Convention have been sent to a new *Bastile*, which had been erected on purpose to receive them: nay, should we even be told, that the British Arms had turned the scale, and determined the war in favor of the allied monarchs: that they had determined no longer to quarrel about the boundaries of their territories, but, from a sense of common danger, had associated together against their subjects, as their common enemy: I know not but some inquisitive persons amongst us might be apt to enquire the names of the allied Kings: and probably might be foolish enough to imagine, that if ever we should have an enterprising monarch on the throne, our liberties might be in rather more danger, from the nations of Europe being governed by despotic monarchs, who had effectually subjugated their subjects, and had large standing armies at their absolute disposal, than if these nations were all democratic republics.—And it is not undeserving notice, that should the French Revolution be suppressed, the European Monarchs will have learnt a lesson from it they will not soon forget: Mr. *Burke* justly observes that Kings will be deterred from granting their subjects any degree of liberty, they will from policy be cruel. Should the continental monarchs succeed in suppressing the French Revolution, they will hardly make Mr. *Burke* a lying prophet. Tyrants are cruel in proportion to their fears.

The mad and boundless ambition of the court of France has been sounded in our ears for above a century: it has been represented as endangering the peace and liberties of mankind; to it we have attributed our wars, our taxes, our national debt, our standing army, and expensive navy. This power, Mr. *Burke* tells us, now no longer exists as a nation; its army without discipline, its finances ruined, he can now only see a vast chasm, which once was France. And is our commerce to be ruined,

our taxes and national debt increased; are we to be involved in all the calamities of war, to fill up this chasm, to restore this dreadful and dangerous power, to give discipline to its armies, and order and energy to its government? will it not be said, Do you regret that this dangerous government lies before you, an object of commiseration and contempt; or was the danger only ideal, and you regret that there no longer exists a pretence for perpetual war, accumulated taxes, and a standing army?

Perhaps it will be said, we do not mean to restore the old government of France. Indeed it is not easy to surmise what is really meant by the farrago of incoherent complaints against France with which we are deafened: but certainly as most of them are *philippicks* against the new government, the only plain inference is, that this abominable government is to be destroyed; and as we should reasonably suppose, the old one to be restored: certainly it appears to be intended, to compel them to have a King. Mr. *Burke's* most vehement complaint is, that they hate Kings. The measures which have been pursued against them, do not seem indeed to have been extremely well calculated to remove their antipathy; and should the King of England join the confederacy against them, it is not quite certain, that it will totally eradicate their strange prejudices against Kings. To make them love Kings, will certainly be rather a difficult task, the utmost we shall be able to effect, will be to compel them to swallow a King, which they will again disgorge, as soon as it is in their power.

But it is the danger which threatens us from the French principles that is mostly founded in our ears. Mr. *Dundas* tells us, it is their principles which have rendered that nation obnoxious and dangerous to Europe. It is their principles Mr. *Burke* so vehemently calls on us to eradicate, and destroy: it will not therefore be amiss to discriminate what they are, and separate them, from what they are not. Mr. *Burke* instead of doing this, talks for hours, about *blood* and *atheism*, and then to produce *stage effect* throws daggers about the house: but after he has finished his *theatric rant*, he must be told, that the circumstances attending a revolution are not its principles, and frequently not the result of the principles; the massacre of Glencoe, or King William's bloody wars, our national debt, the septennial, or riot act, were never called the principles of the English Revolution. Blood and atheism have certainly been charged on both the French and English Revolutions; but never till now were they deemed its principles. The events of *August* and *September* arose from foreign causes, had those causes not existed, the effects would not have followed; yet the principles of the revolution would have been the same. So the hatred to Kings constitutes no part of those principles, if sprang from the hatred Kings have manifested to their government. The offer of confraternity was adopted, to counteract the universal confederation they saw formed against them; or

at least to retaliate it: and had the confederation never been formed, there is not the least evidence to prove, that either hatred to Kings, or the offer of confraternity,, would have resulted from their principles; any more than from the principles of any other republic, or even than from the principles of our revolution.

Having stated what are not their principles, let us examine what they are. "Men being all *free, equal, and independent*, no one can be put out of his estate without his own consent, by agreeing with other men, to join and unite in a community.— Thus that which begins, and actually concludes any political Society, is nothing but the consent of a number of free men, capable of a majority to unite, and incorporate into such society; and this is *that* and that only, which did, or could give beginning to any lawful government. The supreme power cannot lawfully or rightly take from man any part of his property without his own consent.—There remains inherent in the people a power to remove or alter the legislative, when they find the legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them; for when such trust is abused, it is thereby forfeited, and devolves to those who gave it,"

Are these the principles of the French Revolution? they are; but you are mistaken if you think they are extracted from the paltry, blurred, scraps of the *Rights of Man*. They are taken from the celebrated Mr. *Locke's* Treatise on Government, written avowedly for the purpose of defending the English Revolution; and for writing which, he was rewarded with a *thousand* a year, from the British government. Is the war to be undertaken then, to support, or to destroy these principles?

That we are to assist the Austrian and Prussian monarchs, to force upon France the English Constitution; or indeed any kind of free government, is too absurd to be supposed: it is not even pretended, by those who have projected this war. To see the Britian's Arms so employed, would indeed be a remarkable circumstance: the effects of her power, and influence, are indeed to be very visibly traced, both in the numerous Isles of the western world, and along the vast extensive range of Africa's coast: but alas! it only presents to our view, one unvaried scene, of slavery, desolation, and blood. Liberty and happiness, it seems, we deem so estimable, that we keep them to ourselves: even when Poland had formed a government, similar to our own, we formed no confederacy to support it; we suffered it to be subverted by a neighbouring power, without interposing even a memorial in its favor: and Mr. *Burke*, that passionate admirer of the British Constitution, after due consideration resolved, neither to draw his purse, his sword, nor his pen, in behalf of the Polish copy of it. But probably, he had exhausted his whole fund of invective, in inciting the powers of Europe, to defend the old French Government; and therefore was necessitated to abandon the new Anglo-Polish to its fate.

That the continental monarchs should be anxious to destroy the new Polish, and French governments, is extremely natural.

Revolution principles, whether French, English, or Polish, are certainly dangerous to them, in proportion as they are beneficial to their subjects.

Is the war then intended to subvert these principles? Dismissing for a moment the enquiry, whether they be true, or false, dangerous, or beneficial, let us ask a plain question, *How a war with the French republic, is to destroy them?* England is their native land, here they may be deemed indigenous, in France only exotic, and whether suffered to remain; or whether the hand of violence tears up the new planted offset, the mother plant still remains. Here if any where, that must be destroyed. Not only Mr. *Burke's* speeches, and the Duke of *Richmond's* letters, but Mr. *Locke's* writings, must be consigned to oblivion, before the principles of the French revolution can be annihilated. They are not merely the principles of that revolution, but of all our modern revolutions. Mr. *Locke* reduced them into form, for the English revolution: Mr. *Molyneux* resorted to them as a proper foundation for an Irish revolution. Mr. *Burke's* coadjutor, Dr. *Price*, brought them forward for the American, and the National Assembly adopted them for the French revolution. They are still very little the worse for wear, and may serve for twenty revolutions more. It is true those who have used them to effect a revolution, have usually wished, as soon as the end has been answered, to consign them to oblivion: yet they still survive. Admitting then these principles to be dangerous in the extreme: admitting also that their progress in this nation be rapid and alarming: nay, that all the exertions of government will be inadequate to preserve the public peace from the disorders these principles will occasion; still we must request Mr. *Dundas*, Mr. *Burke*, or Mr. *Jenkinson*, to inform us, how a war will eradicate these principles, or prevent their further progress amongst us? Supposing, the Austrian and Prussian Grenadiers, with the assistance of the English Guards, were to eat up Thirty Millions of French, and bring away the eighty-three Departments in their knap-sacks; would these principles be lost? would the murder of thirty millions of people prove them to be false, or would any calamities the French may endure from the hand of violence, make these principles be less admired? If it be intended to root them out, measures very different indeed from those avowed must be adopted.

If indeed it were to be supposed possible, that the Royal Association should totally subvert the new government of France, we might justly entertain the most dreadful apprehensions. The continental monarchs of Europe, no longer engaged in endless quarrels about the boundaries of their dominions, but combined together, in one horrid confederacy, to maintain their power against their subjects; these principles, and all other principles, of benefit and importance to mankind, would be eradicated. Europe would present to our view, a new, and a monstrous system of Government indeed, far more detestable

than the old. One stagnant and putrid mass of despotism, would hang over the whole continent: and it is possible that we might not escape the contagion. Then indeed the plan would present to our view, a grand unity of design; it would not appear, as it now does, in unconnected, and disjointed parts. If this be a part of the plan it is carefully and prudently kept out of sight. We are told nothing of reciprocity. The King of England is to engage in this contest from pure motives of regard to his fellow monarchs, to preserve *their* dignity and power; as King of England, at least, he asks nothing for himself.

But as there is little chance that these principles, whether French or English, will ever be rooted out, it may be some comfort therefore to those who are alarmed about them, to be informed, that however dangerous, or however beneficial, they may be in Germany; yet in England they are unimportant. As principles, they have long existed in this country. They have been appealed to, in defence of both the English, and the American revolutions: but that they had any tendency to produce these events, may be doubted. If the English, the Irish, the Scotch, or the Welsh, should ever feel apprehensions sufficient to induce them to revolt: and should have it in their power to effect it; they may possibly resort to these principles, if they are to be found; but were they to be lost, that circumstance certainly would not restrain them from revolt. They would do as we did at the revolution, first effect it; and then find some Mr. *Locke*, to form a set of principles, to defend it. In the mean time there is little danger of our resorting to them, but as themes for literary discussion. Perhaps the Duke of *Richmond* and a few whimsical men, may wish to see these principles more obviously realised in our government: but to go to war with the French for that reason, is as absurd, as if we were to commence a crusade against the Turks, because a few individuals amongst us, may admire the Koran; or against the idolatrous Chinese, because an extravagant author, has lately expressed his approbation of the Heathen Theology.

The people of this country, in a situation of increasing prosperity, surrounded with comparative misery, will not be easily induced to hazard this happiness. They will not scrutinize accurately into our form of government; nor hazard a public convulsion, by attempting such speculative, or even real improvements, as may endanger the public peace. Some few always have been, and always will be, endeavouring to draw the public notice by their speculations, but the bulk of the nation will give but little heed to them. If ever there be the least danger of their interrupting the public happiness, we shall stop our business and our pleasures for a moment, and convince them of their insignificance. That the public peace was in any danger from these principles, could hardly be believed; and cannot be now even pretended. The public have manifested

such an universal approbation of the government, and its administration; and such a determination to support it, as was never before witnessed. All parties, all religions, all ranks, merely on being informed by authority, that the public peace was in danger, have with unexampled zeal, pressed forward to express their attachment, without even stopping to enquire whether the danger be real, or imaginary. Is this a time to tell us of danger from public commotions? If any man really thought so, he must now be convinced of his mistake; and it is certainly a little inconsistent in Mr. *Burke*, that tho' he represents us as cleaving to our antient prejudices, because they are prejudices, yet considers us as ready to run mad after the most extravagant innovation, the baneful and mischievous effects of which, he says, we have an example of, in the misery they have brought on the French nation. But admitting there were some ground to apprehend danger from republicans and levellers, the measures which have been taken appear to have been fully adequate to the purpose: if libellers write, juries will convict, and courts will punish: if riots should happen, constables or soldiers, will suppress them. These seem to be the proper, we have experienced them to be adequate, and they certainly are cheaper remedies for the evil, than a war against France.

It appears then, that this war cannot have been projected for any of the avowed purposes; certainly not to keep principles out of this kingdom, which were in it before the French revolution took place, and will still exist, whether the French government stand or fall. The war cannot be intended to restore the old government of France, for that, even if practicable, would be exposing ourselves to a known evil. It cannot be intended to give France a good government, for that would be injurious to our trade, and manufactures; nor a bad one, for that we are told she has already. It is hardly intended to engage in a war, to block up Antwerp from our own shipping; nor to prevent Germany, Italy, Russia, or China, from being republics: which can certainly do us no hurt. And a war can hardly be intended, for securing the liberty of the Genevese, the snowy Alps to Sardinia, or the castle of St. Angelo to the Pope. We are hardly going to mount our *Rozinante*, to redress all the wrongs, and engage all the windmills in the world.

If these then be only the ostensible reasons, what are the real ones? Those who have projected this war, are not likely to have done it without an adequate motive; when such men talk absurdly and obscurely, it is because they do not think it expedient to be plain and explicit. If their plans appear weak and inconsistent, it is because we see them but in part; when they are developed and understood, though we may not always perceive any very evident marks of the innocence of the Dove, yet in other respects they will certainly not be found deficient. In investigating the causes of political events, we oftener miscarry by looking too high, than too low. Projects which have been supposed to have had in view the fate of nations, have afterwards

appeared to arise from the private views of courtiers. When then we cannot find an adequate cause for a political event, in the wisdom of the cabinet, it may not be amiss to resort to the intrigues of the court.

Wars in England, have frequently originated in a plan to destroy the minister; and they have usually effected the purpose. The wars of 1739, 55, and the American war, all did. The present minister has obtained, and justly obtained, the confidence, and esteem of his country. It is to the prosperous situation of the nation, resulting from the peace, he owes his popularity: and when the calamities of war are experienced, it will cease. His merit will not in such a case be fairly appretiated.—There is a man, whose influence is supposed to be great, and though through every administration, he has held posts not inconsiderable, he has never ventured to assume the helm. But he may think his son may be a less exceptionable character with the public. Hence is it not improbable, that while rooting out French principles and daggers is held out to the people, and Hanover to the sovereign, as the reason of a war, the true one may only be, that Mr. ——— may be Chancellor of the Exchequer. If a war can be accounted for on this ground, and if it can consistently be accounted for on no other, we have ground to infer, that this is the true, and important reason.

We will now admit, That this reason; or securing Hanover; or restoring the French King; or guaranteeing to Fort Lillo the right of firing on our shipping; or rooting out French principles; or any other of the curious reasons which have been assigned for this war, be sufficient to counterballance the ordinary, and unavoidable evils of war—The stagnation of our commerce—The destruction of our navigation—The depreciation of our funds—The injury of our manufactures—The accumulation of our taxes, and the increase of our debts—Yet is there one circumstance, peculiar to this war, which will demand some attention.

Let it be recollected, we are now playing a royal game. Our adversary has cried check; let us take care that our King be not in danger. This war will hardly be terminated by surrendering a few Islands to the victor. If it be commenced, with the purpose of subverting the adverse government, will it be ended without that purpose being effected? Should we engage in this war against France, to enthrone their King, if it prove unfavourable, they may possibly insist on dethroning ours. We have then to compare, the benefit which will result to us, from subverting the French Government, with the injury we may receive in case of a defeat, from the subversion of our own. If involved in the calamities of a war, we should have to chuse, between our Trade, and our King; I tremble lest in such a dreadful alternative our loyalty should be shaken. Our attachment to the government results from the happiness and prosperity we experience; and we shall as naturally attribute their decline to its defects, as an increasing prosperity to the excellence

of a well ballanced constitution. Peace will produce the most efficacious reply to Mr. *Paine*. If our trade and prosperity increase, his works may be read, but we need be under no apprehensions of their producing any mischievous effect. We shall have little occasion to fear any offer of confraternity. Our sovereign will be perfectly safe, however much the French may hate Kings. And I do not think the public peace would be much endangered, should we even suffer the Revolution Society to drink the Rights of Man, and send the most splendid embassy to their friends the Jacobins.

Such are the benefits of peace, that though the short one we enjoy be the longest (except one) we have had for upwards of a century, the public prosperity has increased so rapidly, that some writers have been absurd enough to attribute it to our wars. The fact only is, that the intervals of peace have given such an impetus to our trade and manufactures, that even six foreign, and two domestic wars, within that period, have only checked, but not prevented their increase. The effects of a long continuance of peace, would far exceed the bounds of common imagination. I have no doubt but it might be proved (as clearly as the nature of the case would admit of) that twenty additional years of peace, would enable us to discharge the whole national debt, without any additional taxes; and that afterwards, even the taxes which it would be incumbent on us to impose, merely as regulations and restrictions, would be far more than sufficient to pay all the national expences, though we included therein that dreadful civil list, and those pensions, and places, of which Messrs. *Burke* and *Paine*, have both so loudly clamoured.

We will now consider the question of a war with France, under a distinct head—*The Law of Nations*. This extraordinary Code has very peculiar properties. It is extremely penal. It never writes a sentence but in characters of blood; and what is still more unfortunate, it is usually the blood of the innocent. We deem it to be essential to justice, that in proportion as a law be penal, it should be strictly, literally, and clearly interpreted, but unfortunately the code of which we speak, is totally deficient in these respects. It is extremely uncertain in its construction, loosely and equivocally interpreted, and rigorously executed. The Spanish Court, within this few years, sentenced many thousands to death at the rock of Gibraltar, on a hundred charges, not one of which were good. We are now about to pass sentence of death, on thousands and tens of thousands, of our fellow creatures. Our pleas like the Spaniards, are numerous; let us be sure if they be valid.

Obscure, and uncertain, as the Law of Nations may be, it is not therefore to be slighted, or trampled under foot. Its obscurity, and uncertainty, are not necessary concomitants. Its principles are derived from the same origin as the Law of Nature, and are equally certain. The obscurities and uncertainties result from these principles being contravened and

injured, by the conduct of nations, which however inconsistent with the true principles, is frequently confounded with them. The sanctity and importance of the law of nations, is great in the extreme. The contravention of municipal Laws, is of a local and of a temporary nature: but when the law of nations is contravened, the effects are unlimited in extent, and in consequences. Nations are as to each other in a state of nature; no sanctions exist to enforce reciprocal justice, but that which never can be supposed to influence bodies of men, the fear of the most high. An observance of the law of nations, can only result from a need of that reciprocal protection they afford, or the fear of retaliation, or a sense of national honor. Our Insular situation prevents a reciprocity of danger, and consequently we need not reciprocal protection with the other nations of Europe. We can engage in wars, secure from all its dangers, we have only to speculate on its imaginary advantages; if a loss accrues, it is only a pecuniary one, unattended with those calamities of war, experienced on the continent. Hence we have hardly any thing to restrain us from unjust wars, unless it be a sense of national honor. How far that has operated, let every quarter of the globe witness! By our peculiarly advantageous situation, it is scarcely possible we can be exposed to danger, or receive any material injury: yet have we been involved in almost perpetual foreign wars; and from the conquest to the present hour, not one can be considered as just, nor as having even a colourable pretext. When we talk of war, the law of nations is never thought of. It is deemed so nugatory in this country, that scarce any of our writers have thought it worth discussing; we have despised it in theory, as we have trampled on it in practice. France demanded of the European powers on what footing they chose to stand with her: War, Neutrality, or Alliance? We declined war, or alliance, and chose Neutrality; with this special declaration, that we would not interfere in her domestic concerns. Such declarations are always considered, as of a very solemn and decisive import: they are the most binding recognitions of the law of nations, and no engagements between nations, are more universally adhered to, it is requisite they should be: otherwise nations must always be armed for war.

If war be commenced, the simple question will be, which party has broken this Neutrality? and in this view of it, we cannot possibly take cognizance, of any thing which has occurred in France; every thing which has happened, or can possibly happen there, is evidently irrelevant, even on the general principles of the law of nations: which in its nature, has no relation but to the intercourse of nation and nation. The injury France has done to any other nation, we have no concern in, unless it be one, with whom we are in alliance; and even then no farther than the terms of alliance bind us; for in that case, we act only as auxiliaries, the nations still continue at peace; and if we go

a single step beyond what we are obliged by the terms of the alliance, we become the aggressors.

Hence it appears, that the only question is, has France transgressed against us? Nothing but that, can possibly justify us in making war against her. We are told she contemplates war. To *contemplate* an offence was hardly ever I believe deemed to be punishable, by any law that ever existed. But if she has *made* war, as well as *contemplated* it, she is not accountable to us, unless it be against us, or our allies; against us no hostility is pretended; she declares she will not attack us, or our ally Holland. She has even been assiduously careful to avoid it. She has not even attacked Prussia; tho' avowedly the aggressor. But France does not observe treaties. This is very strange, she offered alliance to all Europe, they have refused. There consequently can be no treaties subsisting: treaties cannot be binding on one party only, they must be reciprocal. But the objection from us is still more remarkable: we deny her existence as a nation, yet she suffers the commerce of the countries to subsist, according to the terms of a treaty, extremely unpopular in France, certainly very advantageous to England. If this treaty be broken by a war, it certainly will never be renewed. France seems to be so far from aggressing against us, that she sacrifices her interest, to conciliate our friendship.

To deny that France exists as a nation, is absurd in the extreme. The existence of nations or of individuals does not depend on recognition. We may decline any intercourse with France, but all intercourse with her must be as a nation: her existence is as much recognized by a war, as by a treaty. We do not make war with individuals, we punish them as pirates or robbers, for their respective crimes.

Supposing the government of France to be tyrannical, and their conduct to have been as atrocious, as Mr. *Burke* represents: suppose them to be a band of Atheists, who have combined all sorts of follies with all sorts of crimes; yet is it no reason for a war; nor even for declining any intercourse with them, which our commerce, our interest, or our safety may require. We do not mean by sending our Ambassador to Turkey, or to Barbary, to recognize their religions, or to approve their government, or their laws. But admitting the disorderly state of France renders a *deplomatique* intercourse with her inexpedient; yet must that intercourse we have with her be regulated by the law of nations. If we have received injuries, they must be in some mode stated; the proper reparation demanded; and the reparation refused; before we can be authorized to draw the sword.

Indeed if we commence hostilities against her, without these previous steps; and without some other cause for war than has yet been brought to light; it should seem that we are not only producing the usual calamities of war, and endangering the existence of our government; but tearing up those principles, which are requisite to preserve the intercourse of nations.